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Opposite: Matt Smith’s Flux: Parian Unpacked, 2018 © Martin Bond.
DEVELOPING OUR METHODS FOR ENSURING ACCESS TO CULTURE FOR ALL

by Luke Syson
Director and Marlay Curator

The Fitzwilliam Museum is widely considered to be the world’s outstanding university art collection. We care for more than half a million works of art and material culture of exceptional international importance, from Europe, Egypt and Asia – works that connect people across cultures and time. Founded in 1816 ‘for the increase of learning’ and to support all the ambitions of the University of Cambridge, the Fitzwilliam is both a great public cultural asset and an extraordinary scholarly resource – local, regional, national and global in its outlook. We are now building on our achievements in ways that will be truly transformational.

This Review highlights some of these initiatives – describing the many and varied activities undertaken at the Fitzwilliam in the two years between August 2017 and July 2019 – a period of change (especially in leadership), as well as significant achievement, for the Museum.

In November 2017, Tim Knox left the Directorship to take up a new appointment as Director of the Royal Collection. During his four years in charge, Tim’s great knowledge of, and passion for, historic architecture, for museums and for the works of art of all periods and cultures they contain, was manifested in two main ways. He began the important process of rethinking the Fitzwilliam’s building, initiating the restoration of our great nineteenth-century Founder’s Building and developing a Masterplan that will meet the needs of modern audiences, staff, and the collections themselves. He was also acquisitive in the best sense of the word, expanding the collection within its existing spirit in myriad ways and making bold choices – notably in the representation of painting before 1800, sculpture and furniture, an area that needed particular specialist attention. Our galleries are grander as the result of
Tim’s Directorship and the stories the Fitzwilliam can tell about the histories of aristocratic taste, of portraiture and of the art of collecting itself are all very much richer. We are grateful to all the Museum’s supporters in helping Tim with these important acquisitions.

Following Tim’s departure, the Fitzwilliam was delighted and relieved to be directed by Professor Geoff Ward, Principal of Homerton College, on an interim basis, while the search for a new Director was underway. Geoff already knew the Museum well as the Chair of the Fitzwilliam Museum Syndicate, the role to which we were grateful he returned in February 2019. Geoff’s wise stewardship, his steady hand and his genial tact proved immensely important during these months of inevitable institutional uncertainty. Early in 2019, I joined the Museum as its fourteenth Director, eager to explore its outstanding collections and, above all, to start work with our expert and enormously committed staff.

All over the Museum, I found fascinating research and exhibition projects and brilliant public engagement programmes designed to bring audiences of many different kinds to the Museum – from children to seniors, from seasoned museum-lovers to those visiting for the first time, not least from culturally underserved parts of the East of England. Our reach extends from local schools and community partners to scholars working in museums and universities across the globe, from international visitors to those who experience the Museum virtually, especially online. Working together with staff across the Museum, I began the process of formulating a unified and unifying Mission, identifying our main areas of endeavour as we set about making ourselves into a university museum where our research is always in the service of our audiences, and where our public engagement is research-led, and indeed a research activity in its own right.

There is much to be proud of during this period. Our important work on the manufacture and use of Ancient Egyptian Coffins continued, sharing research methods with colleagues in Egypt and coffin parts with the inhabitants of Wisbech, as we took our pop-up archaeology stand to pubs and supermarkets. Our research on the materials and execution of medieval manuscripts, as well as their content, was also ongoing under the banners of the Cambridge Illuminations and MINIARE projects. Our exhibitions and displays were many and varied. Codebreakers and Groundbreakers (24/10/17 to 4/2/18) focused on that extraordinary era when one group of scholars, including of course the heroic Alan Turing, were cracking wartime codes, while others deciphered the ancient Linear B script for the first time. It was wonderful to collaborate with the Cambridge Faculties of Classics and Mathematics on this project. Degas: A Passion for Perfection (3/10/17 to 14/1/18) celebrated the Fitzwilliam’s remarkable holdings of works by this complex genius, and was the second most visited exhibition in the Museum’s history. Deservedly so! Its combination of rigorous scholarship and poetry made it truly memorable. The Fitzwilliam is lucky enough to care for the manuscript of Virginia Woolf’s crucially important feminist text A Room of One’s Own, a central piece in the experimental exhibition Virginia Woolf: An Exhibition Inspired by Her Writings (2/10/18 to 9/12/18), which attracted new audiences to the Fitzwilliam in significant numbers. Finally in this period, and inspired by one of Tim Knox’s acquisitions, the Fitzwilliam staged Beggarstaffs: William Nicholson and James Pryde (7/5/19 to 4/8/19). Conceived as a dialogue between two brother-in-law painters working in the first half of the twentieth century – the scintillatingly precise, socially desirable Nicholson, and the dramatic reprobate Pryde – the exhibition was particularly rich in paintings from private collections, rarely if ever publicly displayed.

Here I would like to thank, most heartily, the Fitzwilliam Museum Syndics for all their work in support of the Museum’s strategy and acquisitions between 2017 and 2019: Dr Nicolas Bell, Professor Rosalind Polly Blakesley, Professor Cyprian Broodbank, Professor Caroline van Eck, Professor Eilís Ferran, Professor Mary Laven, Professor Martin Millett, Mr Roger Mosey, Lady Proby, Mr Nicholas Ray, Dr David Saunders, Dame Rosalind Savill, and Professor Geoff Ward.
From August 2017 to July 2019, the Museum:

- Staged 56 research-based exhibitions and special displays
- Attracted 742,459 visits (392,660 in 2017–18 and 349,799 in 2018–19)
- Played a key role in supporting UCM to attract 2,452,520 visits across all nine sites
- Welcomed 45,284 young people on organised school visits
- Attracted 924,651 unique visits to the website, including our Collections Explorer
- Hosted 323 public events
- Raised over £7.5m in earned income, charitable donations, external grants, sponsorship and membership schemes
- Sent out 355 loans to 167 venues worldwide
- Received 765 loans for our onsite exhibitions

© Halima Cassell. Photography © Jon Stokes.
Developing our methods for ensuring access to culture for all

Our Mission | ONE

Digital outreach

Digital development is fast becoming one of our most effective tools for reaching a wider audience.

We have renewed our focus on digital documentation of the collections for management, access and interpretation. Progress has included technical enhancements to the Museum’s collections management system, Adlib; improved data quality, especially in recording locations; and provision of regular in-house training tailored to the requirements of each department, team or project.

Public programmes

We continue to offer a wide-ranging public programme, as well as targeted learning and inclusion work. Curators, conservators and technicians from across the Museum have collaborated closely with our Learning team to deliver bespoke object-handling sessions for key community partnerships, including ‘Portals’ (for people living with dementia and their carers), and blind and partially sighted audiences. Our adult inclusion programme saw an expansion of our work with potentially isolated older adults as part of ‘Build Connections’, the government’s first funding programme for projects addressing loneliness. The Learning team also worked with the Wisbech and Fenland Museum in spring 2019 to deliver the course ‘Creative Families: Talking Together’, which was funded by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Within the University’s widening participation programme, we introduced subject taster days, and we also embedded new ways of measuring impact as part of wider work to introduce more consistent approaches to evaluating learning. Working with
Cambridgeshire County Council, we introduced new projects supporting language development for early-years children.

Our broader public offering included a vibrant programme of lunchtime talks, studio workshops, study days and academic conferences, early morning tours of temporary exhibitions, specially programmed ‘Lates’ (after-hours events), and Sunday lunchtime concerts.

2018–19 also saw the launch of two exciting projects engaging with ancient Egyptian craftsmanship. ‘The Ancient Egyptian Coffins at the Fitzwilliam Museum’ initiative saw researchers (including the Museum’s Egyptologists and conservators) bringing real museum objects, craft replicas, hands-on activities and digital experiences to communities who might not otherwise have access to the Museum’s research. This was achieved through pop-up demonstrations in community locations including supermarkets, pubs and open-air markets, creating a bridge between people’s practical knowledge and experience of modern trades and recreational pastimes (such as carpentry and painting) and the skills of the ancient Egyptians as evidenced in contemporary artefacts. An important digital outcome was the Egyptian Coffins website (egyptiancoffins.org).

This work was then extended (with Global Challenges Research Funding) by collaborating with the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, on the project ‘Caring for Ancient Egyptian Coffins: Capacity building with Egyptian museum curators of the future’. Over the course of four visits, a Fitzwilliam team provided training in methods of research into and the documentation of ancient Egyptian coffins – encouraging and enabling colleagues at the Egyptian Museum to deliver outreach work in the form of pop-up museums, and undertake peer-to-peer training in understanding coffin manufacture.

Together, the Egyptian Museum and Fitzwilliam teams are documenting and interpreting the Egyptian Museum’s collection of 600 ancient Egyptian coffins, sharing the Fitzwilliam’s research practice and enabling Egyptian Museum colleagues to become self-sufficient curators and conservators, interpreting, displaying and engaging audiences with their outstanding collections.

In preparation for the Feast & Fast exhibition in autumn 2019, we held handling sessions with diverse student and community groups, to learn which objects were of most interest for inclusion, and which storylines would be most appealing for the labels. A short food-themed film was also made for inclusion in the public response zone of Feast & Fast, as well as on the dedicated website, and objects made in some of the community groups were later included in the exhibition.
Ensuring a multiplicity of voices and approaches in our research

Our Mission

During the period 2017–19, Fitzwilliam Museum and Hamilton Kerr Institute (HKI) staff:
- published 19 books and 92 articles or chapters, and 31 reviews, blogs and other publications
- delivered 174 research papers at conferences and workshops (11,727 attendees)
- taught 162 postgraduate sessions to 935 students and 96 undergraduate sessions to 1,243 students
- gave 334 talks to special interest groups both inside and outside the Museum (11,027 attendees)
- contributed to at least 45 courses in other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), all drawing from the collection
- hosted at least 7,000 visits from HE students to study the collections, the Museum building or areas of museum practice
- hosted 20 postgraduate trainees, visiting students and interns at the HKI and in museum conservation, and 396 volunteers

An important collaboration during this period with colleagues in the Faculty of History and other departments across the University enabled the Museum to win funding from the University’s Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) to deliver a conference (in February 2020) focused on ‘The Pineapple’, linked to the Feast & Fast exhibition.

The Breslau Psalter (c.1255–67), MS 36-1950, fols. 49v-50r.
TWO

Ensuring a multiplicity of voices and approaches in our research


As part of the collaborative project ‘Pigments of English Illuminators’ (led by Durham University), the Museum’s Senior Research Scientist undertook analysis of English manuscripts at the Fitzwilliam, Corpus Christi College and the University Library, together with the thirteenth-century Lindsey Psalter, the most important manuscript in the collections of the Society of Antiquaries, London.

Another major international research project, ‘Being an Islander: Art and identity of the large Mediterranean islands’, was launched in 2018. Using Cyprus, Crete and Sardinia as examples, the project seeks to examine and elucidate what defines island identity in the Mediterranean, and to explore how insularity affects and shapes cultural identity — providing a platform to debate cultural evolution in the islands as opposed to on the mainland.
ENSURING A MULTIPLICITY OF VOICES AND APPROACHES IN OUR RESEARCH

Operating under the Auspices of his Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to the United Kingdom and his Excellency the High Commissioner of Cyprus, the project’s main output will be an exhibition, showcasing representative objects from the Fitzwilliam’s Aegean and Cypriot Collections as well as a number of important national and international loans. Other outcomes will include a peer-reviewed edited book (incorporating a catalogue of the exhibition), an international conference to coincide with the opening of the exhibition, and a public programme of activities, events and workshops for all ages, centred on the theme of insular cultural identity in the Mediterranean and other European regions. Digital resources will also be a major feature of the project, which is supported in its research outputs by the AHRC-funded ‘Linking Islands of Data’ project, and funded by grants from the A. G. Leventis Foundation and Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Cyprus High Commission and the Adonis Pouroulis Trust.
Our exhibition Things of Beauty Growing: British Studio Pottery (20/3/18 to 17/6/18) was an international collaboration with the Yale Center for British Art. The largest of its kind in recent times, with over 100 historic and contemporary ceramics by potters including Bernard Leach, Lucie Rie, Hans Coper, Edmund de Waal and Grayson Perry, the exhibition traced the changing nature of British studio pottery through the evolution of specific types of vessel: the moon jar, vase, bowl, charger, set, vessel, pot and monument. The exhibition also showed that studio pottery is a global story, with pots and potters travelling between Britain, continental Europe, Asia, Africa, and beyond.

Six small exhibitions of coins and medals focused on conflict at various periods and across the world: Currencies of Conflict: Siege and Emergency Money from Antiquity to WWII (31/10/17 to 23/2/18); Inflation, Identity and Nationalism: German Emergency Money Between the Wars (27/2/18 to 3/6/18); 1918: Victory and a New Europe (5/6/18 to 30/9/18); Jerusalem: Coinage and Empire from Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century (2/10/18 to 28/1/19); The 1920s: Crisis and Innovation (29/1/19 to 30/6/19); and Making a Nation: Money, Image and Power in Tudor and Stuart England (26/3/19 to 30/6/19).

The theme of ‘Currencies in Crisis’ is being developed further to underpin a new element in the Coins and Medals department, a global collection of ‘Currencies of Conflict and Dissent’. By contrasting the different ways that states and individuals issued, used and defaced money, this new collection will enable research on how the materiality, iconography, form and aesthetics of money changed and developed over 500 years in response to conflict. This will establish a collection unique in British museums, and provide opportunities to connect audiences with the stories of power, politics and human experience that money carries. Defaced and mutilated monetary objects are usually absent from collections, despite their value in providing evidence of contemporary social and political attitudes that are otherwise difficult to observe in material culture. Assembling and disseminating this material will create new opportunities to bring diverse voices to bear on the Coins and Medals collection.
Creating immersive and interactive exhibitions and displays

Our exhibitions during this period exemplified this aim. Degas: A Passion for Perfection (3/10/17 to 14/1/18) – an international collaboration with Denver Art Museum, which was accompanied by two ancillary exhibitions: Degas, Caricature and Modernity: Daumier, Gavarni, Keene and Degas, Desboutin and Rembrandt: Parallels in Prints – was praised in the national press as ‘stunning’, ‘ingenious’ and ‘compelling’, and was the second most highly attended exhibition in the Museum’s history. It marked the centenary of the artist’s death with a celebration of his lifetime’s achievement. A remarkable range of work – paintings, pastels, drawings, watercolours, prints of different types, counterproofs and sculptures in bronze and wax – revealed Degas’s fascination with technical experimentation and his constant drive to expand his means of expression. His lifelong passion for learning from others was revealed in a series of copies he made after works by Italian Renaissance artists and near-contemporaries such as Ingres and Delacroix. Counterbalancing this, a final section examined Degas’s artistic legacy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, notably in the work of Walter Sickert, Pablo Picasso, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, R.B. Kitaj, Ryan Gander and Francis Bacon. The accompanying catalogue, edited by the Keeper of Paintings, Drawings and Prints, Jane Munro, was published by Yale University Press, and the production company Exhibition on Screen made a film, Degas: Passion for Perfection, which was screened in cinemas and on the Sky Arts television channel.

The pioneering and interdisciplinary Codebreakers and Groundbreakers (24/10/17 to 4/2/18) brought together, for the first time, the remarkable intellectual achievements and parallel narratives of two groups of 'codebreakers' working in the same period, but independently: those involved in breaking Second World War codes, and those who deciphered the ancient script of Linear B – Europe’s earliest comprehensible writing system. Attracting nearly 45,000 visitors, the exhibition displayed a rarely seen ‘Enigma’ machine loaned by the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), and enabled visitors to try their hands at code-breaking.
It was appropriate that the Fitzwilliam hosted Virginia Woolf: An Exhibition Inspired by Her Writings (2/10/18 to 9/12/18), since it was in Cambridge in the 1920s that Woolf first gave the lectures in which she urged future graduates of Newnham and Girton Colleges (both at that time for women only) to establish a 'room of one’s own’. With the aim of weaving together an artistic, matriarchal genealogy, this exhibition acknowledged and extolled a wider creative community whose art rallies to and resonates with Woolf’s cry to rectify the ‘lopsidedness of history’.


Right: Works from Degas: A Passion for Perfection.
CREATING IMMERSIVE AND INTERACTIVE EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS

Main picture: Virginia Woolf: An Exhibition Inspired by Her Writings.
Above: Works from the exhibition, including Lucy Stein’s Book of Shadows (oil and charcoal on canvas with snails), 2018 © Lucy Stein.
FOUR

Whistler & Nature (8/1/19 to 17/3/19) was developed by Compton Verney in partnership with The Hunterian, University of Glasgow. It cast a new light on the work of the great late-Victorian master James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Born in America, but living in the UK for most of his life, he was known as an artist with a bold personality and a revolutionary attitude towards the natural world. The exhibition examined how his family involvement in early nineteenth-century industry and his pursuit of a career in the US military shaped his knowledge of observational drawing and influenced his artistic style. It also looked afresh at his work in the context of attitudes to landscape in British art and design.

Beggarstaffs: William Nicholson and James Pryde (7/5/19 to 4/8/19) was given a five-star rating by the Observer and described as ‘wonderful’ by the Spectator. ‘Beggarstaffs’ was the pseudonym used by William Nicholson and his brother-in-law James Pryde. Rejecting their conventional art training, they invented an entirely novel collage technique to create the most innovative posters and graphics of the day. The Beggarstaff graphics and their later individual works as painters had never before been shown together, and the exhibition, curated by Stephen Calloway, explored for the first time the fascinating way in which their reciprocal influence and shared love of striking subject matter worked on their very different temperaments to inspire two remarkable artistic careers.

‘Wonderful’
THE SPECTATOR

Opposite: James Abbott McNeill Whistler, St Ives (watercolour on paper).
OUR MISSION | FIVE

Providing a distinctive, sector-leading digital museum experience

A visitor looks at and listens to a Museum in a Box, linked via small microchips (NFC – near field communication – stickers) to digital audio files. These are activated when a 3D-printed object or card with a sticker attached is placed on the box’s reader.

Our social media platforms are increasingly important in raising the profile of our temporary exhibitions, permanent collections and collections care stories. We are collaborating across the Museum to improve our digital offer, recognising that there is much more work that can be done in this area.

During this period, the Museum won a significant award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), enabling us to fund four post-doctoral researchers working in collaboration with partners in the creative economy. The Fitzwilliam hosted these creative economy engagement fellows. The original grant required them to work with two micro-SMEs (ThinkSee3D and Museum in a Box, both UK-based), and they also established connections with three further creative industry partners.

In March 2019 we launched the Egyptian Coffins Project website. The result of a five-year collaboration between a team of Egyptologists, conservators, scientists and experts in ancient woodwork, it features high-resolution images, films, virtual models and technical reports of the construction and decoration of coffins, and also includes a collection of images from the 2016 Death on the Nile exhibition. The website has proved a model for sharing other research and display activities, enhanced by the increasingly sophisticated digital technology now available.

Looking forward, a new Documentation Policy (approved by the Fitzwilliam Museum Syndicate in September 2019) will support a detailed new Documentation Plan for the period 2019–24, which specifies the future development of all collections documentation, including the resolution of all inventory backlogs to maintain a digital record for every object in our care.
As part of the UCM consortium, we recognise the need to ensure that our collections, assembled over the last 200 years, speak to today’s audiences and retain their relevance for research and teaching. We continue to promote the widest possible access for young people to the University through widening participation projects and programmes, and the Learning department is at the forefront of this activity.

During 2017–19, the UCM secured funding from the Widening Participation Project Fund to develop this work, particularly through our strategic schools work, work experience, targeted projects with priority groups and super-curricular offers. These projects are focused on raising aspiration and attainment, and the acquisition of transferable skills such as teamwork and problem-solving, for pupils from low-income backgrounds – recognising the power of museum learning experiences to build confidence and inspire enquiry.

We also recognise that this approach requires an honest and open appraisal of the complex and unequal histories within which the University’s collections were assembled, and which have legacies within the collections today.

The Museum continues to provide leadership and support across the UCM programme in the areas of learning, inclusion, conservation and digital, and to play an active role in joint programmes. In 2017–19, the UCM focused on inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring the collections stay relevant and engage with the widest range of visitors. We have supported new strands of UCM activity, including the popular Bridging Binaries tours, Museum Remix, and new autism-friendly out-of-hours opening.

The Museum has also helped secure future investment in key shared programme areas, including a renewal of funding from Cambridgeshire County Council for our work with young people with additional needs. We have supported the UCM’s regional role by providing support for Wisbech and Fenland Museum in the areas of curatorial, collections care and learning, and through outreach in Wisbech; and supported the UCM’s national role by representing the consortium on the National Museums Directors’ Council and representing the region on the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance Steering Group.
Acquisitions

Significant acquisitions during this period included a bust of Queen Victoria (c. 1887–9) by Alfred Gilbert (1854–1934). This little-known masterpiece – a virtuoso monumental white marble bust of Queen Victoria as an ageing monarch – was saved for the nation after the Fitzwilliam raised the necessary £1,077,607 to prevent it being exported. The majestic marble monolith is arguably the most impressive and sensitive portrait ever made of the iconic and oft-portrayed Queen-Empress, without doubt one of the most important women in British history. It is a pivotal work in the development of British sculpture at the end of the nineteenth century, and is entirely carved by Gilbert – the most talented and idiosyncratic sculptor of Victorian Britain. It is the only surviving marble by Gilbert in the UK.

In 2018, Jan Adam Kruseman’s posthumous portrait of the celebrated adventurer Giovanni Battista Belzoni, known as ‘The Great Belzoni’ (1824), was accepted under the Cultural Gifts Scheme by HM Government from Daniel Katz Ltd and presented to the Museum in honour of our former Director, Tim Knox. It became the centrepiece of an exhibition in the Octagon on Belzoni’s life and achievements (23/7/19 to 10/11/19).

The bequest of Sir Peter Shaffer included a painting by Keith Vaughan, two stunning watercolours by Natalia Gontcharova.
BUILDING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE CARE OF THE COLLECTION

(1881–1962) and two drawings by Dame Elisabeth Frink (1930–93), one a portrait of the donor.

Funds raised in honour of Craig Hartley, retired Senior Assistant Keeper in the Department of Paintings, Drawings and Prints, enabled the purchase of a print by Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865) and a volume of eleven etchings by Alexander Runciman (1736–85).

The Museum benefited from a gift of 74 ancient coins from the late Professor Ted Buttrrey, Honorary Keeper of Ancient Coins. The Museum also worked with the Ades family and the Art Fund’s Cultural Gifts Scheme to secure the permanent allocation of 70 rare and important Iranian ceramics previously on long-term loan, thereby developing our collection in this area while helping to fulfil our ambition to embrace a global history of art and material culture.

Conservation and collections care

Maintaining and improving the care of the collections is one of our crucial functions. A major focus of work in this period was the management of the closing and later reopening (in October 2019) of Gallery 3, which involved storage, conservation, decisions about the new decoration and hang, the arrangement of loans, and the various activities involved in recording and publicising this major event.

The Egyptian Coffins Project continued, with analytical work aimed at answering specific questions on particular pigments and on the composition of complex surfaces. There was a focus also on the technical investigation and treatment of severely deteriorated Middle Kingdom coffins.

In addition to the preparation of numerous objects for exhibition and loan, the mammoth project to clean, conserve and label the Glynn Parian-ware (370 pieces) was undertaken.

A pilot collaboration involving the paper conservators comprised a survey of condition together with storage and conservation needs of a representative sample (110 items) from the Lennox-Boyd bequest of fans. A specialist workshop for staff on the materials, techniques and conservation of portrait miniatures on vellum and ivory launched a further new cross-departmental and HKI project.

We welcomed a new Conservator of Objects with a specialism in coins and other metal objects, who has designed and started a survey of the department’s holdings in order to define priorities for conservation treatment and care of the collection, including storage.
The Works of Art on Paper conservators also undertook a major review of storage needs. Work to rehouse some particularly vulnerable parts of the collection, such as over-sized prints, ran alongside the usual heavy commitment to preparation of material for exhibition and loan.

Against a background of work on incunabula, a survey and rehousing of the Henderson collection of more than 270 charters, and repair work on the most fragile architectural drawings of the Founder’s Building, a major milestone for the Manuscripts and Printed Books department was the treatment of one of the most significant books in the collection, the 1540 Apianus Astronomicon Caesarium. A highlight of work undertaken for Trinity College was conservation of the eighth-century Pauline Epistles.
‘Do Not Touch’, a Museum-wide research project, examined why and how frequently visitors touch objects on open display and how the risks can be mitigated. Meanwhile, Hamilton Kerr Institute students undertook environmental monitoring in the galleries as part of their postgraduate Diploma, utilising newly developed logging equipment. The HKI also checked or gave minor treatment to numerous pictures for loan, and all the paintings from Gallery 3 were condition-checked.

The Hamilton Kerr Institute (HKI)

The HKI’s work for external collections has been extensive and wide-ranging. The allegorical Omnia Vanitas from Kingston Lacy (National Trust) has proved to be a fascinating research project, as well as a complex but rewarding treatment, its complicated genesis indicates that it must stem from Titian’s workshop. The

Isaac Oliver miniature of Lord Herbert of Cherbury (Powys Castle) was examined in depth, and has prompted and informed further ongoing research into English miniatures of that period. The HKI has also continued to work on the Wallace Collection’s eighteenth-century Venetian vedute by Canaletto, Guardi and their followers; nine more paintings have been examined technically, of which five have been fully treated, revealing new insights into the creation and diffusion of copies.

A large Heritage Lottery Funded project to conserve three paintings from Lewes Town Hall was completed, and the very complex treatment of Franceschini’s Hagar and Ishmael (private collection) was also concluded. For English Heritage, a Portrait of a Young Man (Apsley House), possibly by Murillo, has been fully cleaned, and technical examination has revealed doubts about its authorship that prompt further research.

An early townscape by Jan Van der Heyden (from a private collection) proved revelatory in its technique, as research has revealed that the artist had developed a method based on glass painting to allow the execution of extremely fine details of the buildings and trees, hitherto suspected but not understood until now.

The Institute also undertook onsite work in Oxford, Weston Park and Eton College, amongst other locations, as well as a detailed survey of a major holding of medieval panel paintings at Hexham Abbey.
DEVELOPING OUR METHODS FOR ENSURING ACCESS TO CULTURE FOR ALL

Developing an extraordinary building that unites and realises these aims

Development

Between 2017 and 2019 the Museum remained committed to securing appropriate philanthropic funds to support its activity and priorities. These donations were received from trusts and foundations, individuals, businesses, legacies and membership groups (Friends of the Fitzwilliam and the Marlay Group). We are truly grateful to receive support from the Monument Trust, the Estate of Paul Mellon, Arts Council England and Cambridge City Council, and philanthropic gifts from large numbers of individual and corporate donors. Legacy gifts and bequests, which follow
DEVELOPING AN EXTRAORDINARY BUILDING THAT UNITES AND REALISES THESE AIDS

in the generous tradition of our Founder, Richard, 7th Viscount Fitzwilliam, enable us to undertake impactful work and acquire incredible objects. We express our gratitude for all legacies received during this period.

Our membership groups, the Friends of the Fitzwilliam and the Marlay Group, remained a key focus for the Development team, who organised bespoke events and lectures: 31 events for the Marlay Group and 34 events for Friends. The subscription income to the Museum in 2017–19 totalled £405,000, supporting new acquisitions as well as vital conservation, curatorial and outreach activities. Throughout this period the Museum also benefited from sponsorship support from TTP Group plc and Brewin Dolphin. We remain immensely grateful to our members and business partners. Please see the Thank you! section for a full list of our funders.

After a period of scoping, evaluation, sourcing and initial training for the project in 2018–19, we began the implementation of our new ticketing/CRM system, Tessitura. This will support our booking of spaces for groups, generate revenue from tickets for events and our membership schemes, and enable us to provide a more effective and targeted approach to our audiences.

We held a wide range of out-of-hours events: private views, events to support our public programme, and also corporate and private hire of the galleries, which generates income for the Museum. Part of the challenge during this period was the closure of the Main Entrance Hall for the lantern project. This affected some corporate event bookings, but also led us to look at other spaces and find ways to use them imaginatively.

The buildings

Work continued with the architects MUMA on the development of the Masterplan Feasibility Study and Strategy for the Museum. Following the new Director’s arrival in February 2019, a series of briefing workshops took place with MUMA and Estates Management to ensure that the Masterplan strategy reflected the priorities identified by the Museum’s Mission Review and Strategic Planning process and the University’s Mission. These were followed by presentations by the Director to the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the University’s leadership and executive teams, including the Director and Head of Major Gifts at Cambridge University Development and Alumni Relations (CUDAR).

CUDAR, in partnership with the Director and the Museum’s senior team, will now work on a fundraising feasibility study to underpin and direct fundraising efforts. Alongside this, the Museum will work on developing a series of options appraisals with input from key stakeholders.
Finance

All the money the Museum raises, through grants, gifts, bequests, membership fees, donations and shop sales, helps to secure our future and enables us to continue to offer free education sessions, inspiring exhibitions, world-class research, exemplary collections care and free access to our galleries.

During the period 2017–19, the Museum received income as follows:

2017/18
Total 10,042 (£’000)

- University Direct Contribution: 596
- Investment income: 59
- Other grants, donations and sponsorship: 2,209
- Earned income: 1,305
- Museums and Galleries Tax Relief: 1,219
- Research England Higher Education Museums and Galleries Fund (HEMG): 1,420
- Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding: 2,015
- Legacies: 984
- Membership income: 1305

2018/19
Total 9,072 (£’000)

- University Direct Contribution: 235
- Investment income: 59
- Other grants, donations and sponsorship: 1,420
- Earned income: 1,219
- Museums and Galleries Tax Relief: 1,306
- Research England Higher Education Museums and Galleries Fund (HEMG): 1,420
- Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding: 2,203
- Legacies: 788
- Membership income: 1,213

Thank you!

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Thank you!
Degas, Caricature and Modernity: Daumier, Gavarni, Keene
12 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO 21 JANUARY 2018
Degas possessed what his friend Walter Sickert described as ‘a rollicking and somewhat bear-like sense of fun’. This exhibition looked at three caricaturists and satirists whose work Degas admired and collected in large numbers: Honoré Daumier, Paul Gavarni and Charles Keene. Their everyday subjects captured a vivid impression of the nineteenth century, referred to by Charles Baudelaire as ‘the epic and heroic quality of modern life’, which tallied with Degas and his contemporaries in their interest in modernity.

Degas’s Drinker: Portraits by Marcellin Desboutin
19 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO 25 FEBRUARY 2018
Edgar Degas’s famous painting In a Café (L’Absinthe, 1875–6) features a dissolute bearded man whom Degas described as ‘the epic and heroic quality of modern life’, which tallied with Degas and his contemporaries in their interest in modernity. 

Degas: A Passion for Perfection
3 OCTOBER 2017 TO 14 JANUARY 2018
An international collaboration with Denver Art Museum, this exhibition marked the centenary of the artist’s death with a celebration of his lifetime’s achievement. A remarkable range of work – paintings, pastels, drawings, watercolours, prints of different types, counterproofs and sculptures in bronze and wax – revealed Degas’s fascination with technical experimentation and his constant drive to expand his means of expression. His lifelong passion for learning from others was revealed in a series of copies he made after works by Italian Renaissance artists and near contemporaries such as Ingres and Delacroix. Counterbalancing this, a final section explored the different aspects of Degas’s artistic legacy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, notably in the work of Walter Sickert, Pablo Picasso, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, R.B. Kitaj, Ryan Gander and Francis Bacon.

Terra Firma
24 OCTOBER 2017 TO 4 FEBRUARY 2018
Artist Pallavi Paul’s installation considered the mechanics and practices of truth production. The central motif of the ‘secret’ invited visitors to engage with ideas of espionage, secrecy and the world of information by viewing, reading and walking on this artwork. This textual landscape, composed visually to look like code, responded to the Codebreakers and Groundbreakers exhibition.

Codebreakers and Groundbreakers
24 OCTOBER 2017 TO 4 FEBRUARY 2018
This pioneering and interdisciplinary exhibition brought together, for the first time, the remarkable intellectual achievements and parallel narratives of two groups of ‘codebreakers’ working in the same period, but independently – those involved in breaking Second World War ciphers and those who deciphered the ancient script of Linear B – Europe’s earliest comprehensible writing system.

Degas, Desboutin and Rembrandt: Parallels in Prints
27 OCTOBER 2017 TO SUNDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2018
In nineteenth-century France, artists, critics and their readers praised the art of Rembrandt van Rijn. His paintings could be admired in the Louvre, which was increasing its collection of his art, while his prints were circulated or reproduced in publications. Both Edgar Degas and Marcellin Desboutin studied, sketched and copied from Rembrandt’s art, and these Rembrandt prints revealed remarkable parallels with Degas and Desboutin.

Currencies of Conflict: Siege and Emergency Money from Antiquity to WWII
31 OCTOBER 2017 TO 23 FEBRUARY 2018
Sieges have been a common feature of warfare for most of recorded history, with emergency money in the form of coins or paper being made for the use of the defending garrison or local people. This display shed new light on the story of these emergency currencies from the ancient Greek world to the Second World War.

Hugo Dalton: The Revival Lightdrawings
21 NOVEMBER 2017 TO 14 JANUARY 2018
The artist Hugo Dalton projected his dramatic lightdrawings onto sculptures in the Greece and Rome Gallery. His works interacted with the architecture of the surrounding gallery to create a series of immersive installations. Dalton’s work has previously been shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum and Today Art Museum (Beijing), and he has created a stage set at Sadler’s Wells Theatre.

Writing in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean
16 JANUARY TO 10 JUNE 2018
This display of a variety of ancient writing systems used in the eastern Mediterranean, including a famous bilingual inscription from Idalion, Cyprus, was the result of a collaboration between the Fitzwilliam Museum, the British Museum and the research project ‘Contexts of and Relations between Early Writing Systems’ (CREWS).

The Object of My Affection: Stories of Love from the Fitzwilliam Collection
30 JANUARY TO 28 MAY 2018
Love was very much in the air in this exhibition, which contained objects alive with the range of emotions that it commands – from admiration and affection, joy and passion, longing and despair, to insults, indifference, grief and remembrance. The exhibition showcased the Fitzwilliam’s collection of valentines, which date from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries and include a wide variety of sentimental and decorative types as well as comic examples. 

Alongside the valentines was an assortment of other objects relating to the theme of love, including posy rings, love tokens and works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and James Gilray.

Love-Themed Ceramics from the J.W.L. Glaisher Collection
30 JANUARY 2018 TO 28 MAY 2018
The mathematician and astronomer J.W.L. Glaisher is best known as a collector of ceramics, but he also maintained a number of secondaries collections, including a large collection of valentines. This display offered a small group of love-themed objects from Glaisher’s ceramic collection, selected to complement his valentines cards.

RA250 at the Fitz
13 FEBRUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2018
The Royal Academy celebrated their 250th anniversary in 2018. As part of RA250, institutions around the country joined in with their celebrations, including the Fitzwilliam Museum. Together we identified seven Royal Academicians who have connections with Cambridge and the Fitz: Eileen Cooper RA, Stephen Chambers RA, Anne Desmet RA, Antony Gormley RA, Nigel Hall RA, Mali Morris RA and Eric Parry RA. We asked each of them to select works from the Fitzwilliam collection which they find inspiring, and to share why.

Inspired by Civilisations
27 FEBRUARY TO 6 MAY 2018
One of the themes brought out in the BBC series Civilisations was how we look at art. In one programme, Mary Beard explored that theme in relation to some of the earliest images of the human body in the world. Included in this episode is footage of some of the objects from our collection: two Greek
vases, and encaustic portraits taken from their original context in ancient Egyptian coffins (partly because they seemed much more appealing out of their perhaps macabre mummy casing). Our display showed how these objects relate to the Civilisations theme, and suggested ways in which the theme can be explored throughout the galleries of Antiquity in the Museum.

Inflation, Identity and Nationalism: German Emergency Money Between the Wars
27 FEBRUARY TO 3 JUNE 2018

Notgeld, or ‘necessity money’, first appeared in Germany and Austria during the First World War as a consequence of the inflation caused by the war and a shortage of metal for coins. These colourful notes were issued in many places throughout Germany and Austria, and while initially used as token money, they became popular with collectors. Drawing on a large collection of Notgeld gifted to the Fitzwilliam by Professor Ted Buttery, this display showcased these remarkable visual artefacts. It traced the development of German art and identity in the early interwar period against a backdrop of hyperinflation, growing nationalism and ultimately the rise of the Nazis.

Matt Smith’s Flux: Parian Unpacked
6 MARCH TO 1 JULY 2018

Exploring themes of mass production, celebrity, colonialism and our notion of history, this impressive installation by ceramic artist and curator Matt Smith featured over 100 sculptural Parian busts from the Fitzwilliam’s outstanding permanent collection, this exhibition acknowledged and celebrated the Fitzwilliam’s role in the development of the Parian industry between 1848 and 1880. Parian busts were hand-crafted jewellery and metalwork, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Things of Beauty Growing: British Studio Pottery
20 MARCH TO 17 JUNE 2018

The largest of its kind in recent times, with over 100 historic and contemporary ceramics by potters including Bernard Leach, Lucie Rie, Hans Coper, Edmund de Waal and Grayson Perry, this exhibition traced the changing nature of British studio pottery through the evolution of specific types of vessel: the moon jar, vase, bowl, charger, set, vessel, pot and monument. The exhibition also showed that studio pottery is a global story, with pots and potters travelling between Britain, continental Europe, Asia, Africa, and beyond.

Edward Lear
10 APRIL TO 22 APRIL 2018

A specially curated display on Edward Lear from the Museum’s collection, including autograph letters, watercolours and drawings (many from his travels).

Floral Fantasies
5 JUNE TO 9 SEPTEMBER 2018

An exhibition of some of the Museum’s exceptional botanical watercolours and drawings, including an array of posies, bouquets and elaborate floral arrangements.

1918: Victory and a New Europe
5 JUNE TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2018

In 1918 the western allies led by Britain, France and the United States finally defeated Germany and its allies, after four years of brutal conflict. The great empires of Germany, Austria and Turkey fell, and a new Europe was born. The end of World War I and its consequences were seen through the coins, medals and banknotes of the time.

Designers & Jewellery 1850–1940: Jewellery and Metalwork from the Fitzwilliam Museum
31 JULY TO 11 NOVEMBER 2018

Showcasing little-known treasures from the Fitzwilliam’s outstanding permanent collection, this exhibition celebrated exquisitely designed and often hand-crafted jewellery and metalwork, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Print RBels: Haden, Palmer, Whistler and the Origins of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers
18 SEPTEMBER 2018 TO 6 JANUARY 2019

This touring exhibition commemorated the 200th anniversary of the birth of the founder and first President of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers (RE), Sir Francis Seymour Haden. The selection of prints, ranging from Haden to work by current RE members, reflected on the achievements of the society and the changes it has undergone. Works by Haden’s contemporaries at the end of the nineteenth century, including Samuel Palmer and James Abbott McNeill Whistler, were hung alongside prints by current members, prints of all of the twelve RE Presidents (from 1880 to 2018) formed a bridge between past and present.

Virginia Woolf: An Exhibition Inspired by her Writings
2 OCTOBER TO 9 DECEMBER 2018

It was in Cambridge in the 1920s that Woolf first gave the lectures in which she urged future graduates of Newnham and Girton Colleges (both at that time for women only) to establish a ‘room of one’s own’. With the aim of weaving together an artistic, matriarchal genealogy, this exhibition acknowledged and extolled a wider creative community whose art rallied to and resonates with Woolf’s cry to rectify the ‘lopsidedness of history’.

Jerusalem: Coinage and Empire from Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century
2 OCTOBER 2018 TO 28 JANUARY 2019

The Holy City of Jerusalem is central to the three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Control of the city has been contested by the great empires of the region and has changed hands many times. This special display explored the history of Jerusalem through the coins minted and used in the city from the earliest coinage to that of the Ottoman Empire.

Amateur Epher of Distinction: Prints by Francis Seymour Haden
9 OCTOBER 2018 TO 6 JANUARY 2019

2018 marked the bicentenary of the birth of Sir Francis Seymour Haden, a leading surgeon, wealthy member of London society, distinguished print collector and highly successful amateur etcher. Now an unfamiliar name, Haden was celebrated in his own time as a major figure in the ‘Etching Revival’, championing the freedom and expressiveness of the technique. He was recognised as Rembrandt’s successor and he broke new ground in scholarly thinking on Rembrandt’s prints. An exceptional group of Haden’s work, lent from a private collection, traced the development of his style, and included unrecorded early proof impressions that demonstrate his manner of working.

Collecting and Giving: Highlights from the Sir Ivor and Lady Batchelor Bequest
4 DECEMBER 2018 TO 3 MARCH 2019

In 2015, the Museum received an exceptional collection of drawings, ceramics, glass and bronzes from Sir Ivor and Lady Batchelor, through the Art Fund. Sir Ivor, Professor of Psychiatry at Dundee University, and his wife Honor spent decades collecting a wide array of fine and decorative arts, advocating that ‘One had to learn by looking, which is the best education.’ Highlights from the collection were displayed for the first time, including drawings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin, William Orpen, Walter Sickert and Gwen John, alongside fine examples of eighteenth-century salt-glazed stoneware, rare seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Spanish glass and nineteenth-century French animal bronzes.

Whistler & Nature
8 JANUARY TO 17 MARCH 2019

Born in America, but living in the UK for most of his life, James Abbott McNeill Whistler was known as an artist with a bold personality and a revolutionary attitude towards the natural world. Developed by Compton Verney in partnership with The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, this exhibition examined how his family involvement in early nineteenth-century industry and his pursuit of a career in the US military shaped his knowledge of observational drawing and influenced his artistic style. It also looked fresh at his work in the context of attitudes to landscape in British art and design.
Two successive selections of works on paper, to celebrate the outstanding generosity of benefactors and donors who have helped to enrich the collections. The exhibitions also highlighted a number of exceptional works bought with funds raised or donated by individuals, charities and other supporters.

**Eddington's Prehistoric and Roman Past**
**28 January to 8 July 2019**

A small selection of items found by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the North West Cambridge site, now renamed Eddington. The display included the single most important find to date, a tightly rolled twelfth-to-thirteenth-century pewter or lead seal, which when unrolled revealed a king with a *fleur de lis*-topped sceptre.

**The Gentle Art: Friends and Strangers in Whistler’s Prints**
**29 January to 12 May 2019**

To complement the major show on James Abbott McNeill Whistler, the Print Room held an exhibition of the artist’s etchings, drypoints and lithographs from the Fitzwilliam’s collection, focusing on people. The range included figures emerging from the shadows in the artist’s early ‘French set’ of the 1850s, intimate domestic scenes of friends and fellow artists in London, and late lithographs of nudes and portraits of his sister-in-law ‘Bunnie’ made in 1879.

**Secrets of a Silent Miniaturist**
**5 February to 18 August 2019**

A selection of the Museum’s Isaac Oliver miniatures was chosen to showcase some of the recent discoveries made about his work. The miniatures were displayed in the Rothschild Gallery of Medieval & Renaissance Art, alongside other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century miniatures, including examples by Nicholas Hilliard.

**Emma Smith: Light Installation**
**19 February to 24 February 2019**

Consisting of two works, one outside and one inside the Museum, this light installation was created by Cambridge artist Emma Smith, following a programme of workshops with local groups during 2018.

**Making a Nation: Money, Image and Power in Tudor and Stuart England**
**26 March to 30 June 2019**

The major dynastic, political and cultural changes that occurred in England under the Tudors and Stuarts were traced in this exhibition. The money and medals of this 250-year period provide a fascinating insight into broader developments in artistic expression, monarchy, nationhood and trade in a rapidly expanding world.

**Beggarstaffs: William Nicholson & James Pryde**
**7 May to 4 August 2019**

‘Beggarstaffs’ was the pseudonym used by William Nicholson and his brother-in-law James Pryde. Rejecting their conventional art training, they invented an entirely novel collage technique to create the most innovative posters and graphics of the day. The Beggarstaff graphics and their later individual works as painters had never before been shown together, and the exhibition, curated by Stephen Calloway, explored for the first time the fascinating way in which their reciprocal influence and shared love of striking subject matter worked on their very different temperaments to inspire two remarkable artistic careers.

**The Coffins of Pakepu**
**24 to 25 May 2019**

A special viewing of the individual elements of the coffin set of the ‘water pourer on the West of Thebes’, Pakepu. The coffins had recently been the focus of a detailed study into their construction and decoration. Each element was laid out separately, with members of the research team on hand to answer questions.

**Jennifer Lee: A Personal Selection**
**11 June to 22 September 2019**

This small display brought together objects from the Fitzwilliam’s collection that particularly resonate with the award-winning artist and potter Jennifer Lee. Her choice included modern studio ceramics, ancient Chinese bronzes, and antiquities from Greece and Rome, with each object accompanied by an explanation of the affinity she feels with it. This display accompanied the larger exhibition of Jennifer’s work, *Jennifer Lee: The Potter’s Space*, at Kettle’s Yard (9 July to 22 September 2019).